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Songs
of the
Shrapnel Shell

Cyril Morton Horne



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Songs of the Shrapnel Shell

✓
**Songs of the
Shrapnel Shell**

And Other Verses

By
CYRIL MORTON HORNE ✓



THE PAGE PUBLISHING COMPANY
CHICAGO, ILL.

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CYRIL MORTON HORNE



But Three Hundred Copies
of this Book have been
printed, of which this is
Number 66

In Memoriam

Cyril Morton Horne

Born March 22nd, 1886

Died

"Somewhere in France"

January 27th, 1916

A LETTER

Chicago, March 16, 1916.

*The Page Publishing Co.,
402 Schiller Building,
Chicago, Ill.*

Gentlemen:

I send herewith the last revised corrections of the verses written by Captain Horne, together with his latest photograph taken just before he left for the front. I am very glad indeed that these verses are to be published in the beautiful edition you have planned, as I am sure that all of his friends will be glad to keep as a permanent memento these last collected verses from his pen. I feel that it is a duty I owe his memory to extend to you every possible co-operation in publishing this book, for it is my belief—the belief of my friends—and Bobbie's—that his work deserves permanent recognition, and an exalted place in the literature of my country, and the history of the great war.

Sincerely yours,

Marie Horne

PREFACE



CYRIL MORTON HORNE, late Captain of the Seventh Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers, was killed in action, fighting with His Majesty's troops, "Somewhere in France," January 27th, 1916. Many of the verses in this little volume were written by him in the trenches, between attack and counter-attack, with the shrapnel shells shrieking overhead, with mines and counter-mines being exploded underneath, with the ever-constant, surging grey tide of charging infantry threatening at any moment to overwhelm his command. Living for more than a year half-underground, like the moles he so vividly pictures in one of his poems; with the chances a thousand to one against him of ever emerging from the great conflict alive; he wrote these little verses, some of them scribbled in pencil upon scraps of paper, and sent them, one by one, to the woman across the seas to whom he had said good-bye when his country called. Their publication in this volume has been not only a duty which she felt she owed to the many friends and admirers of Captain Horne, but a tribute to his memory which will endure as long as there is a love of good literature and an appreciation of fine poetry, in the land. In both his native England, and in the America which he loved so well, these verses will be read and treasured by all who knew him; while it is the belief of the publishers that the true merit of Captain Horne's literary work will be recognized and will long endure.

Captain Horne was but 29 years of age when he was killed under most dramatic circumstances. He gave up his life trying to rescue a wounded British soldier lying in front of the trenches. A shrapnel shell exploded overhead just as his comrades were ready to cheer him for his heroic rescue. Both men were killed instantly. Captain Horne's body was buried near the battlefield, and a single white cross now marks his last resting place.

Captain Horne, before going upon the stage in America—where he won fame and renown for splendid impersonations under the name of "Bobbie" Horne—saw service with the British army in India, where he acted as aide to Lord

Kitchener. Later he was attached to the personal staff of the present King of England. After going on the stage he appeared in several New York productions until the call of duty impelled Captain Horne to rejoin the regiment with which he had formerly served.

One note of explanation—in simple justice to his memory—is due regarding the poem, “Dolores,” included in this volume. A page from the *London Sketch* of June 15th, 1915, with the picture of a pretty girl, drifted one day into the “dug-out” serving as Captain Horne’s headquarters. Five other officers with Captain Horne made varying comments upon the saucy picture. He was so impressed with what they said, that he wrote down, in different verse for each officer, just what each thought of the picture. Each officer was given a copy of the six verses. One of them probably sent his to a friend in London. A few months later, the *London Sketch* printed the six verses, without giving Captain Horne the credit for their authorship. The verses have been copied around the world, unfortunately without Captain Horne’s name attached, and have been printed as “anonymous.” The true facts concerning these verses are set forth in a letter from the Junior Subaltern mentioned, written to Mrs. Marie Horne, and will effectually prove that Captain Horne—and no one else—wrote all six verses. This explanation is made because the fame of these verses is already world-wide, and at a later date some question may arise as to their authorship.

No personal tribute to Captain Horne’s splendid heroism, magnificent bravery, many fine qualities and lovable personality, is necessary. All who knew him, loved him and mourn his untimely death. He died as he had lived—an English gentleman.

W. A. P.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
"Afterwards"	17
"The Moles"	19
"Chrysallis"	41
"The Devout Highlander"	21
"The Little Church at Allouagne"	20
"The Blood Feud"	23
"England"	43
"To the Love of a Year Ago"	25
"The Morrow"	27
"Mons"	29
"Dolores"	31-34
"Aftermath"	35
"Corporal Michael O'Leary, V. C."	37
"Me an' 'Im"	39
"Diplomacy"	42
"Love-Dawn"	67
"To My Unborn Son"	69
"Chot' Nagpore"	61
"Teluch by the Fountain"	71
"The Life Story of Little Billee"	47
"The Ballad of the Bad Lot"	55
"The Woman Who Went to the Other Side"	53
"The Cry of the Cave Man"	50
"Men of the East and West"	49
"Akron of the Jungle to Surini, the Nautch-Girl"	59
"The Irish Exile"	51
"Lost Love"	63
"Son of Mine"	66
"The Valley of Rest"	60
"My Country"	70
"Epigraph of the S. S. Titanic"	58

Songs of the Shrapnel Shell

AFTERWARDS

IN the Afterwards, when I am dead,
I want no flowers over my head.

But if Fate and the Gods are kind to me
They'll send me a Sikh half Company
To fire three volleys over my head—
To sweeten my sleep, when I am dead.

And these are the words they will write for me—
"Here endeth a Fool's Philosophy!"

And many shall sneer: But Someone shall sigh,
Yet I shall not hear them as there I lie,
For this is the Law of Lover and Friend—
That all joy must finish, all feeling end.

And many shall laugh: But Someone shall weep,
Yet I shall not know—I shall lie asleep;
A worn-out body, a dried-up crust;
Ashes to ashes and Dust to Dust!

And they'll drink a toast up there in the Mess,
"Here's to a friend in his loneliness!"
And music and talk for a while shall cease
While my Brothers drink to their Brother's Peace.

And the Sikhs shall say (That were once mine own):
"Who rode with us often now rides alone!"
And leaning over the grave they'll sigh—
"Sahib murgya! Ki jae, Ki Jae!"*

And I, who so loved them one and all
Shall stir no more at the Bugle call,
But another Sahib shall ride instead
At the head of my Sikhs, when I am dead.
And even this thought which hurts me so,
Shall cease to trouble me when I go.

My chestnut charger, Mam'selle,
(She was fleet of foot and I loved her well!)
Shall nibble the grass above my head
Unknowing that one she loved is dead.

Someone,—my Horse and my Company
Shall fail to smile at the comedy;
Shall strive to reason yet fail to guess
That Life is little and Death is less!

* (The Sahib is dead! Rest his soul!)

And they shall sorrow a little space
Till somebody comes to fill my place;
But all their sorrow, their grief and pain,
They shall expend upon me—in vain!

And you—if you read this epitaph—
Harden your heart I pray you, laugh!
But if you would deal with me tenderly
Place one dew-kissed violet over me;
I claim not this and I ask no more,
Yet—this was the flow'r that Someone wore
In the long-dead days that have gone before.



THE MOLES

I VE been in a trench for fifteen days,
I'm choked for the want of air;
It's harvest time where my mother stays,
And I'm wishing that I was there.

I've ceased to count in the scheme of things,
My courage has waned and set;
It's trysting-time where the mavis sings
And I'm wishing I could forget.

With straightened shoulders and hearts that sang
"For Freedom and Liberty!"
That was the battle-cry that sang
From the men-that-we-used-to-be.

We've learnt the law of shot and shell,
We've learnt the law of steel;
But the Law of the Trench is a cultured Hell
For it stifles the power to feel.

Death we have ventured many times
Nor flinched at the sacrifice,
But if this be the debt of our youthful crimes—
Lord God we have paid the price!

We have used our youth and lost the strength
That the spirit of youth controls;
We have become no more at length
Than partially human moles.

We're growing inanimate: Bit by bit
We're getting inert—decayed;
The score of our sins was boldly writ
But Mother of God—we've paid!

And this is our Fate: When the Gods are kind
Our existence shall simply cease—
A sniper's bullet—a trench that's mined—
God-speed, and a quick release!

THE LITTLE CHURCH AT ALLOUAGNE

THESE are no disturbing questions,
No complexity of creeds,
In the little Church at Allouagne,
Where the soldiers tell their beads.
There be men of many nations
Seared and scarred and battle-lined,
Who go forth upon the morrow
To do battle for mankind.

There be women, sombre-garbed, who
Mourn their husbands or their sons;
There be sweethearts who will never
Know the meaning of love-songs;
There be children; there be old men
Neither strong nor worldly-wise,
Yet no doubt nor fear nor trouble
Is reflected in their eyes.

And said one, "I had a son; God
Grant him happiness and rest;
For I loved him well and truly
But Bon Dieu knows the best."
Said another, "'Twas my husband
Who has paid his country's toll,
But the Holy Priest has granted
Absolution to his soul."

Then I noticed near the altar
One who neither mourned nor prayed,
One whose way had oftentimes lain on
Roads where history is made.
And quoth he—"Confess me, Father,
For no man controls his Fate,
And tonight I seek the trenches
So—tomorrow may be late!"

Then I marvelled—being worldly—
That saw no doubts and fears,
No vain-glorious denials,
No false sentiment nor tears.
There are no disturbing questions,
No complexity of creeds,
In the little Church at Allouagne,
Where the soldiers tell their beads.

THE DEVOUT HIGHLANDER

I

LISTEN, Laddies: Gin ye go into the battle, be devout;
Dinna trust to thews an' sinews or yer sin wull find ye out;
Dinna think yoursel' omnipotent—gie Providence his due
An' then fight fer a' yer worth because the Lord expects ye to.

An' ye maun pray, pray,
Lord defend the right;
Pray, pray,
Before ye start to fight;
Dinna waver at a trifle,
(Use the butt-end o' yer rifle).
Ask the Lord to gie ye strength wherewith to smite,
smite, smite,
AN' PIT YER BACK INTO IT, LADDIE, GIN YE
SMITE!

II

When the Germans came upon us, said me mither—"Donald,
Boy,
Ye'll no look upon this fightin' as a pastime or a joy."
Sez I—"Mither, I'm for prayin' an' for fightin' I am loathe,
But the Lord Almighty wills it that I'll do a bit o' both!"
But ye maun pray, pray—etc.

III

I remember out at Wipers I obsarved a German lad
Takkin' pot shots at our snipers—but his aim was awfu' bad—
So I prayed the Lord to help me, found the range and drew a
bead
An' the Lord was verra kind because the German laddie's de'ed.
So ye maun pray, pray—etc.

IV

There was muckle lusty fightin' round the Yser river banks,
An' the German dum dum bullets caused confusion i' the ranks;
It was then, through force o' circumstance (as feyther used to
say)
I felt justified i' feeling I had rayther fight than pray!
But ye maun pray, pray—etc.

V

At La Bassey I was singled—while we wallowed i' the mud—
By a German unbeliever who was thirrstin' for me blood,
So I turned before retreatin' frae the trench, an' made a stand
An' I pierced him thro' the stomach as the Lord had fully
planned.
So ye maun pray, pray—etc.

VI

This is no a lecture, laddies; ye can only do yer best—
 Draw a bead an' pull the trigger, an' the Lord wull do the rest.
 Ye maun simply try to follow out the teachin' o' the church,
 An' since the Lord is on yer side ye mauna leave him i' the
 lurch.

But ye maun pray, pray,
 Lord defend the right;
 Pray, pray,
 Before ye start to fight;
 Dinna waver at a trifle,
 (Use the butt-end o' yer rifle).
 Ask the Lord to gie ye strength wherewith to smite,
 smite, smite,
**AN' PIT YER BACK INTO IT, LADDIE, GIN YE
 SMITE!**



THE BLOOD FEUD

(A situation which occurred in the company of a Native Indian Regiment after a retreat "somewhere in France.")

“FAIZ Ullah, fall back on the trenches!”
“Sahib, thy word is Law;
But the blood of my brother stanches
And the shame of it chokes my craw.
He was not killed by a better
But in foulest infamy slain,
And when I have paid his debtor—
I will return again!”

“Son of a nameless Mother—
Dog of Iniquity!
Have I to account to thy brother
Or dost thou account to me?”
“Sahib, thy words are nectar;
But my brother lies in the mud
And because of his shame-smeared spectre
I have sworn a feud of blood.”

“Faiz Ullah, stifle thy sorrow—
Thou hast a good word said,
But patience until tomorrow
And I will avenge thy dead!”
“Nay, stay thou snug in the ‘nullah’—
Thou hast big work to do.
But I am only Faiz Ullah
And—my kinsman calls for his due!”

“How can I wait for the daylight
Leaving unpaid my bill?
Does the Jungle sleep through the Gray light
Or the tiger stay for his kill?
Moreover, through such delaying
In what is a just design,
Some other might do the slaying
And rob me of what is mine!”

“Faiz Ullah, I have commanded—
Hearken, I will entreat:
Go thou not single handed
If the breath of thy life be sweet;
The War-Lord’s dogs are unsleeping—
Ten score of them, drunk with blood;
Shall they cleanse thine eyes from weeping
Or thy brother’s body from mud?”

"When thou wast young at the Labour
I spurred thee to enterprise,
I taught thee to swing a sabre,
I made thee bridle-wise.
Now art thou Father and Mother—
I follow thee here and there,
But my brother is still my brother
And—this is my own affair.

"I will come back to thee later,
Faithful to thy command,
When I have slain a traitor
And severed his guilty hand;*
When he is dead and burning
In Hell, for my brother's balm,
Then I will make returning
Hamara Sahib, Salaam."†

Eight hours later.

"I found him, Sahib. Fear chilled him
From the gleam of my lifted knife;
He would have cried but I killed him
And ended a craven life.
I struck, and my just repentance
Set the soul of my brother free.
So now I await thy sentence,
Sahib, Bahadur Jee!‡

*Note. The line, "Severed his guilty hand," refers to the custom of some Native Tribes of cutting off the hands or the ankles after death as a mark of extreme contempt.

†Note. "Salaam my Sahib."

‡Note. "Illustrious Sahib."



TO THE LOVE OF A YEAR AGO

(Written from the Trenches)

TOMORROW before the Day-Dawn we'll be out on the foe-
man's track,

Facing those grim, gray field-guns, and I fancy— we won't
come back;

Tomorrow: So near its coming—I cannot stave it away,
And all the tomorrows will soon be a passionless yesterday.

It isn't the thought of the Maxims, or the red-rimmed steel I
fear,

But the knowledge that you have forgotten the passion of
yesteryear.

Idle of me to blame you; yet, had you one regret,

It were easy to face tomorrow, easier to forget.

You, with your passionate kisses; you, with your red, ripe lips;

You, with your soft brown eyes that the stars could never
eclipse.

Idle of me to blame you! Passion and Pleasure dies;

The Loves of our youth are foolish, the thoughts of our age
are wise.

Springtime fades, and the violets last but a little while,

Yet who can remember the violets when the rich, red roses
smile?

Summer is welded into an Autumn of brief regret,

So it wouldn't be human nature for a woman—not to forget.

The twilight hurts me a little; only a Winter since

It wafted us into Fairy-land, and I was the Fairy Prince;

You swore me a staunch allegiance, so I gave you my heart for
Throne,

And even the Sprites and the Wood-nymphs discreetly left us
alone!

But now reality's bitter; instead of the Twilight spells

I hear the whistle of dum-dums—the breaking of shrapnel
shells;

The voices of rough-chinned comrades come back of the trench
to me,

And the bullet that found my brother has broken my reverie.

I shall think of you as I loved you; I shall never strive to guess
Whose are the arms you rest in, whose are the lips you press.
Maybe some word may recall me—break in on your laughter
gay—

And the Someone-You-Love will question who beckons your
thoughts away;

And you shall smile as you answer—"My wonderful Fairy
Prince,

It was a waltz that reminded me of Someone I loved—long
since!"

Springtime dies, and the roses fade, the pale stars wane and set,
So it wouldn't be human nature for a woman—not to forget.



“THE MORROW”

YE PRAYED for “The Day,” and “The Day” is here,
Lighting a fearsome sight—
A nation desolate, empty, drear,
Where men lie stricken and stark and sere;
Ye prayed for “The Day,” and “The Day” is here,
But what of the grim cold night?

Ye rushed at your goal in Hell-hot haste
And trampled on Freedom’s Fame;
Ye laid an innocent land in waste,
The rights of Motherhood ye debased,
Aye, God’s own Temples have ye defaced,
People of blood-black shame!

Countless infamies have ye done
Since the red-rimmed dawn of “The Day;”
Yet for the crimes of steel and gun,
Serf and soldier and sire and son,
Ye shall account for them every one;
“Vengeance! I will REPAY!”

Ye have spoken words to the Gods that be;
Did ye pray for the babes ye slew?
If there be a God for such as ye
Who have razed our homesteads and strewn the sea
With the devils of Hell-born anarchy,
Then where be the God WE knew?

Children of innocence lie dead—
Victims of lustful sin;
Sonless Mothers and maids unwed
And lonely widows, their hands in dread,
Have stretched to Heav’n; and their hands are red
With the blood of their Kith and Kin.

Ye looked for “The Day”—the day of pain
When the world would be wrapped in sleep;
Ye sought for a Universe—in vain!
Rheims and Aerschot and fair Louvain—
Ye have tilled the soil, ye have sown the grain
And as ye have sown, shall reap!

Thou, too, in thy mock-majestic role,
Thou, Monarch of Misery—
From thee and thine there must come a toll,
Thou’rt damned of body and damned of soul
From sky to sea and from Pole to Pole—
From here to Eternity!

Long have ye prayed for this fearsome "Day"
Of bitterness, tears and gall.
But TOMORROW cometh, austere and gray;
There is a reck'ning—a price to pay;
The Mills of the Gods grind slowly, Yea,
BUT THEY GRIND EXCEEDING SMALL!



MONS

I

“ONLY a little further, Tommy,
Only a mile or so.”
“I’d rather be dead so I’d get me rest,
But while I’m alive—I’ll go.”
“Only the length of a barrack square,
Tommy, we’re nearly through!”
“I’d rather be shot so I’d rest me feet,
But I’ll stick if ye tell me to.”

For it’s march, march,
Water and slush and mire;
March, march,
Back into France—retire;
We’re wadin’ through mud that’s ankle-deep,
We’re dam’ near crazed from the want o’ sleep,
But we’re holdin’ our lives distinc’ly cheap
An’ waiting the word to fire.

II

“Think of the medals you’ll surely have
Pinned on your manly chest!”
“I’d barter my hopes o’ Kingdom Come
For twenty-four hours o’ rest!
I ’av’nt the ’eart to chew me shag,
I ’av’nt the strength to feel;
Me Bayonet’s dropped in the ditch be’ind
An’—me bayonet’s made o’ steel.”

But it’s march, march,” etc.

III

“We’re taking the shortest road, Tommy,
Back to the camp-fires bright.”
“Dam soon I’ll lie in a ditch hard by
Or turn in me tracks an’ fight!
I’ve got to stand for the ’and to ’and
Or sleep like a milk-fed ’og;
Let’s turn our guns on the German sons
Of a mongrel female dog!”

“But it’s march, march,” etc.

IV

“Look at the lights ahead, Tommy—
Less than a half a mile.”
“Then God be praised for the journey’s end,
But I ’av’nt the strength to smile;

I 'av'nt the guts to clap me 'ands,
I 'av'nt the voice to cheer;
I 'ave retired, but I'm too dam' tired
To look at a glass o' beer!"

It was march, march,
('Ave the soles o' yer boots gone thin?)
March, march,
(But when'll the fight begin?)
We 'eld our lives an' our safety cheap,
We've sown, but somebody else must reap—
We're due for that seven days' extry sleep
An' we've finished our job—Turn in!"



DOLORES

After the Picture "A Feather in Her Cap," by Paul Kirschner.

This picture was found in a Dug-out in the firing line by six officers. It was cut from "The Sketch" of June 15th, 1915. It was first the subject of impersonal admiration, but the personality of the picture obtruded itself in the Dug-out; the only piece of femininity among six males, it soon became the chief topic of conversation. The six different outlooks of the six men were put into verse by Captain Horne.

SIX of us lay in a Dug-out
At ease, with our limbs a-stretch,
And worshipped a feminine picture
Cut from a week-old "Sketch."
We gazed at her Silken Stockings,
We studied her Cupid bow,
And we thought of the Suppers we used to buy
And the girls that we used to know.
And we all, in our several fashions,
Paid toll to the Lady's charms,
From the man of a hundred passions
To the Subaltern child-in-arms.
Never the sketch of a master
So jealously kept and prized,
Never a woman of flesh and blood
So truly idealized.
And because of her slender ankle,
And her coiffure—distinctly French—
We called her "La Belle Dolores"—
"The Vivandiere of the Trench."

THE CAPTAIN'S TRIBUTE.

Laddies, I despise the female species,
(Tho' they say that love-affairs are sweet),
So I dinna care about the picture,
(Tho' she's awfu' neat about the feet).

While I have a verra easy conscience,
Yet I find it hard to sleep o' nights;
P'raps it is that after sae much bloodshed
I'm unnerved by lookin' at such sights.

So I'll gaze nae mair upon the picture
Lest my thoughts from Righteousness should stray,
I shall just forget she's in the Dug-out;
Only—dinna tak' the lass away.

THE IRISH SUBALTERN.

I'm wondering why I squirm and seethe
Whenever I gaze awhile
At the girl with the perfectly ripping teeth
And the deucedly topping smile.

She wears her clothes so devilish well,
And she's such an attractive wench
That she could be all the world—Aw, Hell,
I'm still in this blistered trench!

Her ankles angle so daintily,
Under her sheath-like skirt—
Which in itself appears to me
Divine, tho' distinctly—curt.

Her silk-shod foot to me heart, anew,
Tender excitement brings,
And the lace of her petticoat peeping through
Suggests such feminine things.

I'd like to ruffle her perfumed hair,
With the hand of a connoisseur,
But as I'm in a trench and she's not there
Perforce I must leave her—pure.

THE ENGAGED SUBALTERN.

Amber eyes, amber eyes,
Opening up in shy surprise,
Were you by
Now, would I
Still remain so worldly-wise?

Conscience-free I can be
Tho' you gaze askance at me;
Still, my dear,
Were you here,
Would I then be conscience free?

Harvest bare Virtue reaps—
Circumstance his vigil keeps;
Could I reach
You, my peach,
Which of us but virtue sleeps?

THE MARRIED MAN.

When I turned about in the small Dug-out
My glance on the Picture tarried,
So I hied me away from the fair display,
Remembering I was married.

THE VERY JUNIOR CAPTAIN.

The Captain paused at the Dug-out door;
In his breathless way, he observed, "Oh, Lor',"
What a Pearl of a Girl, you chaps; my word,
I'd buy her a quart of the best, a bird,
A box at the Gaiety—Lor', what fun.
I'd do the thing as it should be done;
Supper at Murray's, a perfect floor,
And what could a fellow wish for more?
Sensuous music, a dreamy band,
A delicate pressure of the hand;
Then after a last liqueur or so
A whispered word in the Hall, what, ho!
I'd drive her home in the daylight drab
And trust to luck in the taxi-cab.

THE IDEALIST.

I have known many loves, Dolores,
Fleeting and tender, grave and gay—
Each one absorbing in its fashion.

I have known
Love and laughter and tears and passion,
Times I have watched the Fairies dance
Heavenwards; and too well, perchance,
I may have loved at times, 'tis true;
Yet I have dallied lightly, too—
Dallied to while the hours away.
I have known many loves, Dolores.

Bought kisses, bartered hearts,
Budding passions and base intrigues,
The infatuation that fatigues
The mind and the heart;
Riotous nights when the wine was red,
When music rippled and laughter sped
Nimble-footed from lip to brain—
Flung wide to the winds of Heav'n again.

All this was part
Of the days long-dead.
I have tasted it all, Dolores.

And now you come, and all the loves long-ended,
Sorrows too poignant and delights too sweet,
Dead till you came—have risen and are blended
Into the Love I lay before your feet.

So shall I love you; I shall never touch your mouth,
Nor shall my fingers through your tresses stray—
Your tresses, breathing of the Scented South
Where wood-nymphs whisper and where fairies play.

Your slender limbs, in youthful animation
Erstwhile that would have thrilled beneath my touch,
Shall rest in unawakened fascination
Since I have loved too little—or too much.

Your blue-veiled eyes shall never droop coquetting,
Nor shall you feel the surge of Passion swell;
You shall not know the sorrow of forgetting
When you have loved—not wisely—but too well.

Aye, I have known full many loves, Dolores—
Fleeting and lasting, feeble and intense;
And so, sure-footed, do I come, Dolores—
Bearing the Master-gift—Experience.



AFTERMATH

I

A GRIM gray tribute of memory
Is all we have left to give
To those who have fought and fallen
From those who sorrow and live.
Memory lives; and we wonder
If the law of the Gods was kind,
For the hardest battle was fought by
The Somebody-left-behind.

II

I see the faces of Mothers
Lined with the rime of tears;
Wives are calling my brothers,
And children of tender years.
I hear the wail of the widow
Louder than many guns—
The sob of the love-lorn Virgin
Mourning her unborn sons.

III

Mother shall call to Mother,
"Sister, my heart is sore;
I that was loved am barren—
My man is gone to the War!"
And stagnant shall lie in their glory
Those who Victory claim,
While the vainly sacrificed Vanquished
Shall stagnant lie in their shame!

IV

What shall we give in tribute?
A statue of carven stone?
Shall we mock with a graven image
The One-who-is-left-alone?
Who fought the sternest battle?
Who was the more oppressed?
The man with the blood-stained rifle
Or the babe at his widow's breast?

V

What would He ask—our brother
Fallen before the gun?
What would He pray, but humbly—
"Father, Thy will be done;
Give us this day we ask Thee
Father, our daily bread."
Aye, and give us the means to help
The sons of the Mighty Dead!

VI

When the last cannon has spoken—
The last grim carnage wrought,
When the last of our foes are broken
There's a war that's still to be fought;

There's a girl who was left unmarried,
There's a baby without a name;
England, remember the remnants
Of the men who upheld your Fame!

VII

Remember the fallen foemen,
The valiant and vanquished brave;
The Mothers whose sons are lying
In a nameless and fameless grave—
Then pray to the God Almighty—
"Peace and Good Will toward men,
Succour to lonely women—
Fore ever more. Amen."



CORPORAL MICHAEL O'LEARY, V. C.

CORPORAL MICHAEL O'LEARY came from the county av Cork,
Entered His Majesty's Army—bein' unwishful to work.
Michael was sthrong for the Germans—him bein' sickened with
peace,
Tired and discouraged entoirely batin' the County Police.

He didn't know anny German, Belgian or Frinch, but "Begob,
I'll tache thim languide," sez Michael, "whin I get on to the
job!
Crown Prince or Imperor William—divvle a bit do I care;
Shure, it's meself had the thrainin' beltin' the bhoys at the
Fair!"

Michael went into the fightin'—dhrafted he was with the rest—
But 'twas the doubtful amusement learnin' to lie on his chest!
"Sthick it," sez Sergeant Maloney. "Let yez lay down in the
thrinch."
"Shure, 'tis the quare sort av fightin'," sez Mike—"I suppose
that it's Frinch!"

Whin it rained with the Divvle's own fury we had less av a
thrinch than a dyke,
"Be the Table av War and our Lady, 'tis toime we got at thim,"
sez Mike.
The Adjutant, Colonel and Majors was much av the same state
av mind,
And, begorra, the rest av the Rig'ment was hardly a great ways
behind!

The ordhers came out unexpected and up went the Divvle's own
shout,
For the bhoys was onaisy from waitin' to go beltin' the Ger-
mans about!
We didn't waste time in deployin' (with the most av us anxious
to go),
An' O'Leary he found more enjoyment than a Fair day in Balli-
nasloe!

He was first at the thrinch an' his bay'net slid into a six-foot
Yewlan;
Sez the Company Captain, "Go aisy or ye'll get into thrubble,
me man!"
"Arrah, Captain Acushla, don't worry," sez Mike—an' I know
what he felt
When he let go the houl't av his rifle an' eased up the sthrap av
his belt!

From thin on he fought single-handed with the belt he un-
sthrapped from his girth—
For to go near the swhing av his buckle was as much as your
life would be worth!
The Germans was dyin' around him—before I lost count there
was five,
An' I knew that no Yewlan was aisy with Michael O'Leary
alive.

We dhrove out the Germans entoirely, an' when we cud see for
the mud,
We found that the wather we'd fought in was sthrongly diluted
with blood.
The most av the Rig'ment was weary and tired from the fightin'
an' sore,
But Michael was sthandin' blaspheming, an' callin' to Hivin for
more!

He finished eleven sthout Germans. Sez he—"Shure, they're
all fit for Hell!"
An' 'twas only the Throop Sergeant-Major sthopped him beltin'
the Colonel as well!
They mintioned him thin in despatches for what he considered
a spree—
But 'twas more through his belt than his rifle that Michael was
made a V. C.

"Praise the Saints!" sez his Mother in Ireland. "Hould yer
whisht if ye plaze," sez his Dad,
"Praise the weltin's an' beltin's I gave him to make him the
broth av a lad!"
"Praise the Lord," sez the priest (bein' pious), and straightway
he sthartered to pray;
"Praise the Germans," sez Michael O'Leary, "for they gave me
the Hell av a day!"



ME AN' 'IM

ME AN' 'IM was comrades,
'Im an' me was pals,
Liked the same pursoots an'
Loved the self-same gals;
Joined the self-same Reg'ment,
Pooled out—win or lose—
Smoked the self-same baccy,
Drank the self-same booze.

We 'ave 'ad our quarrels—
Lord Almighty knows;
Bill 'as often gave me
Such a bloody nose!
Once I jabbed his left eye,
Knocked him clean beside;
Lord, it was a mix-up;
Larf? I nearly died.

For such-like amusements,
Soon we 'ad no chance,
Seein' we got quartered
Somewhere out in France.
Learned to lie in trenches,
Smelled the stench o' blood,
Potted 'eathen Germans,
Wallowed in the mud.

When we got to chargin',
P'raps we wasn't glad,
'Cos those ruddy snipers
Fairly drove us mad.
Regiment fixin' bay'nets,
Colonel in a fuss,
Blimy Billy whispers—
" 'Ere's a chance for us!"

While we was deployin'
Gawd—I 'eard a cry—
Bill 'ad got a bloomin'
Bullet in 'is thigh!
Down I drops beside 'im,
All me nerves a-jig,
Bill just lay and whimpered
Bleedin' like a pig.

As I crouched with Billy
Things was at their wust—
Lost the bloomin' Regiment—
Couldn't see for dust.
Back o' me there comes wot's
Called a curassoor
(Tho' that's not the name I
Called 'im, to be sure!)

'E was fair demented
With the craze to kill,
Emptied 'is revolver
Into Blimy Bill!
That ain't 'ardly cricket,
That ain't decent play!
But, by Gawd Almighty,
That's the German way!

Round I swings me rifle,
Cops 'im with the butt;
Breaks me bloomin' knuckles
On 'is German nut!
Knocks 'im cold, and bein'
Far too mad to shoot,
Finishes the bus'ness
With me blimy boot!

Can you 'ardly blame me—
Notin' wot I've said—
If I can't abide a
German till 'e's dead?
Seems I can't rest easy
While the blighter struts
Till I twist me bay'net
'Alf way through 'is guts!

'Taint the slightest use, tho',
Simply seein' red;
Billy was me pardner
An' me pard—is dead.
If we meet again, like
Parson says we will,
Lord, we'll 'ave a beano—
Me an' Blimy Bill!

'E don't want no flowers—
Save yer R. I. P.—
'E was just a 'uman
Bein'—same as me.
But I sometimes wonder
If the Gods was kind,
Takin' Blimy Bill an'
Leavin' be be'ind!

CHRYSALLIS

(The Evolution of a Junior Subaltern)

I WAS twenty years old on yesterday
But never a night could span;
The years I have lived since yesterday,
(The hair on my temples is turning gray)
For I'm more than a middle-aged man!

Was ever a fate for "only sons"
Such as my fate devised?
I have listened aghast to the barking guns,
Have watched the river of blood that runs
From men who are paralyzed.

We talked of "War" when the fields were green
In the Autumn, a year ago;
Now I, having been what I have been,
Am fain to die, for my eyes have seen
Too much for a man to know.

I saw the form of a man I knew
Writhing in agony;
I covered my face to shut out the view
But the thing was there, and I full-well knew
I had no choice but to see!

Yonder's a schoolmate from "The Hill"—
I was his fag one year;
And now he lies there cold and chill
While I am alive and tortured still
In the grip of a nameless Fear!

"Steady the men—they've charged again!"
The voice of my Captain rings;
"Steady the men!" When my reeling brain
Is drunk from the sight of human pain
And my nerves are inanimate things!

"Steady the men!" As the word was sped
It changed to a gurgling groan;
I saw that my hands were warm and red
And the thing that they held in them was dead
And I was alone—alone.

I was twenty years old when alarm was sent,
And that was a night ago;
Now I am old and worn and bent,
I have paid the Price, but my youth is spent—
I am one of the Men-Who-Know.

DIPLOMACY

(Extract from a letter of a Jewish soldier of the British Army, interned in Germany, to his wife.)

I

MY VERY dear Mathilda, this is hoping you are well
As it leaves me now at present. There is not so much
to tell.

The air is quite delightful here—the roses are in bloom,
Only Ikey doesn't think so, so they shut him in his room.

II

I really must confess that I am spending happy days,
The comfort and the "Kultur"—it is quite beyond my praise.
The cooking is so good—I wish to do it you knew how—
Only Ikey doesn't think so, so they've stopped his rations now.

III

The stables is our bedroom—quite the best you ever saw,
Mit the gentle German horses in the fragrant German Straw;
If ve failed to praise such kindness ve should stamp ourselves
as prigs,
Only Ikey doesn't think so, so they put him mit the pigs.

IV

In short, my dear Mathilda, Germany is bound to win,
And I'd like to be in London on the day they wander in!
Ve shall all be so contented mit the Prussions holding sway,
Only Ikey doesn't think so, so they shot him yesterday.



ENGLAND!

HOW can ye conquer England—
England that knows not fear?
Liege-lord and Vassal and Freed-man,
Yeoman and belted Peer
Rally to combat the Foreman's
Limitless legions of lust;
Honour and Freedom and England!
God, and the cause of the Just!

Match me the courage of England—
Span me the space of the Sea,
Fetter the forces of Freedom,
Measure Eternity!

Freedom is deathless, eternal;
Tyranny passeth away;
Flung to the winds of Tomorrow
Wrapped in the shroud of Today,
What of the thousands stricken?
Legions have risen again;
Let no thought of losses sicken—
They have not died that are slain!

Match me the courage of England
Span me the space of the Sea,
Fetter the forces of Freedom,
Measure Eternity!

Kindled the ashes of Belgium
Into unquenchable flame,
Dawning the light of Tomorrow,
Open the portals of Fame;
Passeth a world-wide sorrow,
Passeth a Nation's tears,
But Freedom deathless surviveth
Through the uncounted years.

Match me the courage of England—
Span me the space of the Sea,
Fetter the forces of Freedom,
Measure Eternity!

Other Verses

THE LIFE-STORY OF LITTLE BILLEE

(As told by a cavalry man.)

I

S AID the Mother of a certain lad (unknown to you and me),
"What profession shall we fix upon for little son Billee?
Shall we put him in an office (for his health is none too strong),
Where the work will not be tedious and the hours will not be long?"
"Since he's neither strong nor brainy," said the laddie's father,
"we
Had better let him wriggle through the Field Artillery.
If a fellow isn't clever that's about the only way,
For they've neither brains nor sinew in the gallant R. F. A."

II

Now this quite upset his Mother, for the Laddie was her pride,
And she knew he'd have to shoot a gun and maybe have to ride;
And the shots might jar the system of her pretty son Billee,
And he might fall off his charger in the Field Artillery!
Now she didn't know what cav'lry-men are taught when they're
at school—
That an R. F. A. Lieutenant is a double-jointed fool.
If a gun he is afraid of, and a horse he cannot ride,
Then a fellow seeks the R. F. A. where all he needs is "side!"

III

So they sent their Little Billee to an English Public School,
Where he learnt a little discipline, and learnt a little rule;
Where he learnt the self-complacency that education brings,
Learnt to waste a little money—and a host of other things.
Later on he scraped through Woolwich—last upon the list but
one—
Where he learned to ride a little horse and fire a little gun;
Whereupon he ceased from learning, for he'd heard his father
say—
Education isn't needed in the gallant R. F. A.!

IV

In the end he passed from Woolwich—where his presence
wasn't missed—
And his name appeared in time upon the graduation-list.
But his comrades didn't love him—his career was far from snug,
And he earned the reputation of an easy-going mug!
So he sought for active service—as a lot of fellows do,
Where the weeding of the Many makes the glory of the Few—
And his mess-mates, who had "ragged" him, said goodbye, and
softly sighed,
For the Gunnery Lieutenant who could neither shoot nor ride!

V

He migrated from Calcutta to a spot called Bullampore—
Which is fifteen miles from nowhere and is called "The Devil's
Door;"

There was trouble on the Frontier, so his Mother's pride,
Billee,
Was sent to quell the "trouble," with the Field Artillery.
They were peppered by a musket-fire from daylight until dark,
They were peppered by a cannon—that came over with the
Ark—
Till the officer commanding swore an oath I hate to tell—
Said, "I wish that blasted cannon were the other side of Hell!"

VI

I have told you that our hero, as an officer, was bad,
For he hadn't got a brain—and couldn't use it if he had!
Minus brains and plus ambition—and withal an only son,
He decided by the Living God that he would spike that gun!
So he crawled upon his tummy, skirting rocks and trees galore,
Which was quite the wisest thing that he had ever done before!
Reached the Hillmen, with a yell that woke Creation, spiked
the gun,
Sang a graceful little Swan Song—and then died—his mission
done!

VII

War is—not exactly pretty; but then Life is much the same;
And it's just the individual that brings a Regiment Fame.
Billee murmured very softly, just before he passed away—
"Who the Hell has any kick against the gallant R. F. A.?"

VIII

Over Billee's country homestead lies an atmosphere of gloom,
And his Mother creeps unnoticed into Billee's lonely room;
For it doesn't stop her sorrow—just remembering that she
Is the Mother of a Hero in the Field Artillery!



MEN OF THE EAST AND WEST

I HAVE travelled far, I have travelled fast,
Strange lands I have wandered through;
In the winding roads of my shadowy past
Have I ever encountered you?

Do you hail from the Jungle, Fellow-man,
Where the big brown grizzly kills?

Do you speak the language of Hindustan
Or the grim Thibetan Hills?

Do you fight and freeze in the Arctic seas,
Or float 'neath a tropical Sun?

Come, brother, if you have done any of these,
Then the language we speak is one.

For what do we know of the City kind—
We men of the soil and the seas?

Of the man refined with the cultured mind,
Whose breath is a foul disease?

Aye, we be men from the soil and the sea,
Workers of toil and stress;

Untamed and free as the winds we be,
That sweep through the wilderness!

We speak one language, my brothers. Then
I am no more afraid;

The work of my pen shall be read by men
And not by a puling maid!

So this is the word from me to ye,

My comrades, my friends and my brothers,
Men of the soil and men of the sea,
I write for ye and no others!

For we have travelled the same broad road,
With the same blue sky to screen us—

Aye, Brother, we carried the self-same load
And that is a bond between us.

So here is our bond and here is my hand—
For this is sufficient meeting;

Whatever your land you will understand,
My Brother—I give you greeting!

THE CRY OF THE CAVE MAN

I

I WOULD I could write of beautiful things—
Of fragrant Valleys, of Sunsets rare,
Of fading Twilights, the Lark that sings—
Of the sunlight playing through Someone's hair.
But my heart is hard, and my grime-stained fingers
Are bent and calloused with toil and strife,
And yet the scent of your Beauty lingers—
Follows me into my coarser life.

II

You bring me memories half-forgotten
Of things that existed long ago;
I have sampled the world and found it rotten,
Its Beauty squandered like sun-kissed snow.
So I am weary; my rough words falter
Vaguely; even the work of my pen
Is coarse and unfit to lay at your altar—
My Woman—I write for primitive men!

III

A snow-capped peak that the clouds half smother
With gray-blue veiling—a rose-bud wild—
A breaking wave and the voice of a Mother
Crooning low to an unborn child.
These things are lovely—beyond expression,
Defying Space and Eternity;
Only their thought is a proud possession
Shared unspoken by you and me.

IV

I would have spoken of these—was yearning
To show you a Fairy-Land of Delight,
But my words grew cold while my thoughts were burning—
Killed by the streak of the Dawning light.
I would have spoken to you of Passion,
Your Love-light should have inspired my pen;
But, alas!—I must speak in primitive fashion
My thoughts, rough-hewn in the words of Men!

THE IRISH EXILE

F^AITH, 'tis me that's mighty lonely,
An' 'tis me that's sad and sore;
An' 'tis me that wants to sail back
fl To me native Island shore.
Shure, me heart is sick with longin'
For the fields and pastures green,
For the shmell av Irish "poteen"
An' me auld "caubeen."

In this land there's compensation
If a man can learn a craft;
He can turn an honest penny
With a little honest graft.
But the Winther's nearly over,
'Twill be Summer in a while,
An'—they're diggin' new potatoes
In me Irish Isle.

Oh, there's dancin' and amusement
Here for anywan to take,
But there's nothin' in the counthry
Like a good auld Irish wake.
Father Murphy was the wise wan,
For he towld me I'd be sore
On the day that I'd be sailin'
From me Irish Shore.

I've not been to wan confession
(God forgive me for that same),
But the priests are hard on strangers,
So I'm not the wan to blame.
But God knows I've wrote me sins down
An' I'll reap as I have sown—
I'll confess to Father Murphy
When I come back home.

On the hottest day in Summer,
Whin me head is fit to burst,
Sorra dhrop av Irish "Poteen"
Can I buy to quench me thirst.
Shure, me father'd not lie aisy
In the graveyard, if he'd hear
I'd disgraced his eddication
Gettin' dhrunk on beer!

Aw, bedad, I'm makin' money,
But I'm wishful for to go
To the shpot that I was born in,
In the County of Mayo.
Whin I'm back in father's cabin,
Whin I'll see me Mother shmile,
'Tis mesilf that will be aisy
In me Irish Isle!



THE WOMAN WHO WENT TO THE OTHER SIDE

HERE is a story plain and true—
Never mind when it occurred;
Concerning the case of a tangled two
And how it involved a third.

The woman—well gowned and bedecked with rings,
Was the spoil of the Serpent's curse;
She might have been meant for better things—
Or she might have been meant for worse.

She wasn't a slave to sordid vice,
(Like some of her sex I know!)
But neither was she precisely "nice"—
As the morals of women go.

There came a man, rich in worldly gains,
Whom the charm of the Woman beguiled;
The madness of Springtime thrilled his veins
And—the Woman bore him a child.

Now the Man had an honoured and noble name,
And the strings of his heart were torn,
So he married the Woman of doubtful Fame
For the sake of a Babe unborn.

Her "best friends" smiled at her wedding ring—
Said she had "Gone Down-Hill;"
Maybe she had, but there's such a thing
As paying a long-owed bill!

Memories swiftly die, God wot,
And the visions of Childhood fade;
But the Woman found words that were half-forgot
When she opened her heart and prayed:

"Our Father which art in Heaven above,
Hallowed be thy Name;
I have borne a son—a child of Love—
God spare him his Mother's shame.

"Give us this day our daily bread,
Father, Thy will be done,
But let not my sins when I am dead
Be visited on my Son."

We found her there in the Dawn of Day,
And nobody spoke a word,
For the smile on her features seemed to say,
"I have prayed and my prayer was heard."

So we buried the Woman—the make-believe Wife—
Laid her away to rest;
She had paid the penalty—Life for Life—
For the struggling Babe at her breast.

She bore a Baby after she fell,
Do you call that the "Fruits of Vice?"
Well, she went through her own particular Hell,
And by Heaven she paid the Price!

You shake your head with a fatuous pride?
Oh, don't be the least afraid;
The Lord will provide on the Other Side
For the poor little lamb who strayed.



THE BALLAD OF THE BAD LOT

I

THE world, the Flesh and the Devil—
It's one of the God-dam' three
Or all of them put together
That's played the devil with me.

II

I'm one of the mighty million
That's wasted its chance, and so
We've lost our caste and standing
With the ones we used to know.

III

We might have overcome Nature
If you'd lent us a helping hand,
But you didn't—you shipped us wholesale
Out of our Mother-Land.

IV

We've travelled in alien countries,
We've witnessed curious scenes,
We've slaved for our bread, but now we're
Only the "Might-Have-Beens."

V

You pious and Godly Christians,
You're everything we're not,
And why should you stop to worry
Over a dam' bad lot?

VI

If a fellow is hanged for murder
You raise the Hell of a fuss.
But you can't quite make allowance
For the casual ones—like us.

VII

You call us the band of wasters,
The barren and fruitless chaff.
And we smother our wounded feelings
In a kind of a reckless laugh.

VIII

You think that we've got no feeling?
That everything's all the same?
Because we don't whine for mercy,
D'you think that we've got no shame?

IX

You've hated our mere existence,
You trod on our souls like dirt!
We've got none now. But it's no good
Hollerin' when you're hurt.

X

You've never had time to listen,
 You've always hurried along,
 You've never waited to wonder
 What it was sent us wrong.

XI

P'raps we were short of courage—
 Or the courage we took was "Dutch,"
 Or maybe we spent our money
 On wine and women and such.

XII

P'raps from a drink too many
 We laughed when we should have wept—
 Or Passion stirred us, so that
 We loved when we should have slept.

XIII

Aye, maybe a woman smiled, and
 Her beauty led us astray.
 Well, what does the reason matter?
 We'd have gone wrong anyway.

XIV

Our souls were cursed from our cradles
 And what are our bodies worth?
 "Cut it down," saith the Scripture,
 Wherefore cumbereth the earth?"

XV

We're just the dregs of the nation,
 The star of our Youth has set.
 Can you wonder we seek the tavern
 Since the wine-cup makes us forget?

XVI

We want to forget that somehow,
 Sometime, the Gods were kind,
 That we once rode straight at our fences
 Before we got left behind.

XVII

We who have ridden hardest,
 We who have felt the most,
 We who swore that somehow
 Or other we'd reach the Post!

XVIII

We're down, we've taken a tumble
 At the great big wall of Fate.
 We made a struggle to finish,
 But now—it's too late—too late.

XIX

The pals of our youth have cut us,
 For they are gentlemen still—
 They've got no use for the friendship
 Of the men who have gone "down-hill!"

XX

We're Bad Lots! But we come in useful—
 Our bodies are going cheap—
 We can plant your colonies broadcast—
 And somebody else will reap.

XXI

We've lived as an alien people,
 We'll die on an alien turf,
 Unwept, unsung, forgotten,
 And washed by an alien surf.

XXII

Has everyone quite forgotten
 The poor little grains of chaff?
 Will nobody pause a minute
 To write us an epitaph?

XXIII

We who have ridden straightest
 And scorned to look at a gate,
 Ridden until we tumbled
 Over the Bank of Fate.
 We tried to ride to a finish—
 But we got to the post, too late!



EPIGRAPH OF THE S. S. TITANIC

(Reprinted through the courtesy of Harry J. Ridings.)

I

WHEN the God of all the oceans called the Ice-King to
his aid
Lest the men who sailed his waters should forget to be
afraid,
When he claimed his toll of victims we were left to hear the
tale
From the Female of the Species who was sacred to the male.

II

When the mighty ship was riven on the cold relentless ice
'Twas the woman who was rescued; 'twas the man who paid the
price.
When the Sea-God swept the vessel, leaving death upon his
trail,
Men provided for each Female who was sacred to a Male.

III

Take your hats off to the Captain, to the passengers and crew;
(There are men we needn't honor, but these men are mighty
few);
God created man the stronger, made the woman weak and frail,
So the Female of the Species must be sacred to the male.

IV

Take your money from your pockets, pay as freely as you can!
For each hero was a brother and each brother was a man!
Don't forget when you acclaim them as the men who didn't
quail,
That each one has left a female who was sacred to her male!

V

Just remember that each hero had a woman of a kind,
And he takes his last grim journey with a woman left behind;
He has taught us all our duty and we can't afford to fail,
We must help the lonely Female who is mourning for her Male.



AKRON OF THE JUNGLE TO SURINI THE NAUTCH-GIRL

I

BELOVED, no more need we dissemble—
No more need you bolt your lattice door,
No more need you catch your breath and tremble!
Someone who loved you—loves no more!

II

Someone who drank his fill of pleasure
Now lies naked upon the sod!
Alone, I exacted measure for measure,
Alone—with the help of Almighty God!

III

The love-lord to whom you owed allegiance
Will never look in your eyes again,
Will never sting you into obedience,
Nor wake your passion, nor cause you pain!

IV

Always I knew that in some manner—
That on some day—I would take his life!
The Legions that flocked around his banner
Could not safeguard him from my knife!

V

Do you remember the hours I waited—
Fraught with danger, but oh so sweet!—
Drawing myself—if the Gods so fated—
Flush with your lattice, to kiss your feet?

VI

And so we listened with pulses seething,
With love borne surging on Passion's sigh—
Listened, with tensely-bated breathing
Lest He-who-owned-you should wander by!

VII

Now, over his body the vultures hover,
(For Love is nearly wedded to hate!)
He stood between me and you; moreover,
He was deserving of this by Fate!

VIII

Aye, he was old, and his strength was broken,
Wherefore leant he on lustier lives;
How is the Law of the Jungle spoken?
"He that is fittest of us survives!"

IX

Does the King-stag lead when his antlers shiver?
The wolf-Lord spring, having missed his kill?
Or does the tiger rule the river
When others there be with a paunch to fill?

X

Nay, my belov'd; and did I bungle
Tho' my blood on his knife ran red?
Let us away to the far, far Jungle—
Rest in my arms, for he is dead!

THE VALLEY OF REST

I WAS blind unto Nature's beauty,
Deaf to the song of the sea,
And the wail of the wind in the heather
Was less than nothing to me.

But you came and your voice was calm;
You came and your heart was gold;
You came and you saw and conquered
A life that was yours to mould.

You came and my eyes were opened
To the beauty of God's domain,
To the valley of rest you brought me
From the city of silent pain.



CHOT' NAGPORE

I

A YE, that was Life in those sun-baked Hills—
A life that touches me now and thrills
The blood in my veins once more!
One lived the life of a man up there,
A life unfettered from minor care—
One breathed the freedom of God's good air
In the Hills of Chot' Nagpore!

II

I learned much up there in half a year—
To track a bear and to laugh at fear,
To listen to Jungle Lore;
To sit with the Jungle-Folk at night,
To smile at a hasty, quick-timed fight—
I had forgotten that I was white
In the Hills of Chot' Nagpore!

III

I had my own encounters, too
(As many a stout Shikaree knew,
Whose slippery back was sore!)
I had the thews and sinews then,
Was quicker to handle knife than pen;
I lived with a race of fighting men
In the Hills of Chot' Nagpore!

IV

But my one blood foe was Sabur Khan,
Son of a half-breed Jungle man,
Who came from a distant shore;
He knifed a woman one sultry night
So I called him out of the hut to fight!
'Twas a short, swift road from wrong to Right
In the Hills of Chot' Nagpore!

V

The moon shone down on us, face to face;
One of us two in that fatal place
Would never look on her more!
I was a white man, he was black,
I wanted to hear his sinews crack—
He had the knife but I—broke his back,
In the Hills of Chot' Nagpore!

VI

Aye, that was all—it was over soon,
There seemed no change in the flick'ring moon
To what there had been before.
But the ground around was splotted with red,
His knife went home e'er I left him dead,
And for months I lay on a fever bed
In the Hills of Chot' Nagpore!

VII

A Fakir came to me ev'ry day
To charm the pain of my wounds away,
While I—ate—and slept—and swore!
The knife of the Half-breed meant to kill,
But I recovered as strong men will—
I love to dream of that moment still
In the Hills of Chot' Nagpore!

VIII

They sent me back to my home at length—
Sent me back to recover my strength,
To be as I was before.
Civilization is hard to bear,
Here, 'tis a word—'twas a knife out there!
The knife is quicker and far more fair
In the Hills of Chot' Nagpore!



LOST LOVE

Memories of Amir Ali.

I

THE sunset is pain;
It speaks of your sorrowful eyes,
Your passionate sighs
When I fain would sink deep into sleep—
I remember again.

II

Oh, Beautiful One!
I remember your beauty so well,
The dark hair that fell
Like an ocean in wave upon wave
And was kissed by the sun.

III

Come back, let me prove
That the banners of Heaven unfurled—
All the wealth of the world
With its jewels untold, and its gold
Will not buy me from Love.

IV

They spoke to me fair,
Aye, they spoke of a Heaven and God,
Their creed is a rod;
For your sorrowful eyes and your sighs
Are more wond'rously rare.

V

All Life is a scourge,
And the music that bore life along
On the crest of its song—
Is changed to a waning refrain
And is only a dirge.

VI

I am drunk with regret—
With the drunkenness never to cease;
Neither pleasure nor peace
Can relieve. Night and day pass away
But I cannot forget.

VII

Oh, dead Might-Have-Been!
Oh, endless and merciless pain,
To listen in vain
For the music so sweet of your feet,
Was this only a dream?

VIII

Oh, pitiless morn!
To hasten the stars into flight,
To finish the night;
Thus to speed you away with the day
And to leave me—*forlorn!*

IX

To touch but your gown!
 To stifle my lungs with your breath,
 To sink into death.
 I am mad! And my cry is the cry
 Of a man stricken down.

X

I am mad and possessed
 With the devils of ended delight—
 With the blackness of night.
 I remember too much of your touch—
 How your fingers caressed.

XI

So weary am I;
 So deep-buried in rime of salt tears,
 Unwashed by the years
 Or the seasons that pass and repass
 And go silently by.

XII

So thirsty am I;
 I am drunk, yet so thirsty for this—
 The throb of your kiss.
 I am scorched with the fire of desire
 For the scent of your sigh.

XIII

But thirstier yet
 To know you are free of distress,
 Your sorrow grown less;
 That this silence of mine, and that Time
 Will make you forget.

XIV

Thus-wise am I cursed—
 You to picture in alien lands
 With sorry-clasped hands.
 Let my torture go by—I am I—
 But your pain is the worst.

XV

The Nightingale sings;
 You and I who have prayed without words
 Are less than the birds!
 Shall the Nightingale, why more than I,
 Know the pleasure of things?

XVI

The night is far spent—
 One night that brings nearer release,
 When feeling shall cease
 And the fever of strife and of Life
 How my spirit is bent.

XVII

I want to lie still,
To be free from this torturing mind,
From thoughts of this kind;
To lie still while days pass, neath the grass
Where no sorrow can thrill.

XVIII

But you? You shall thrill!
For beyond and more lasting than death
The scent of your breath,
Your nearness, your touch that is bliss,
The spell of your kiss
And your Beauty, your presence—all this
Will follow me still!



SON OF MINE

SON of mine, and your Mother's
Offspring of Hopes and Fears,
To the Mountain of Joy we hail you
From the Valley of many Tears.

Mine Own Son, strong in his birthright,
And his Mother, strong in the joy
Of bearing a stalwart Manling
Whom I may call "My Boy."

What shall we make him? A soldier
In the Valley of Hindustan,
Hard by the Mother Jungle
Where a man is indeed a Man?

Where the haft of a lance he shall handle,
And grip the hilt of a sword,
While a hundred voices acclaim him—
"Chota Sahib" and "Lord."

He shall be feared by foeman
On mountain or marshy fen,
Heart-free of Western Women,
Leader of Jungle-men.

Thus shall my Son be nurtured—
Sparing the fruitless rod—
So that he grows in stature
And the fear of Almighty God.

And he shall not spurn to sorrow
Those who their sorrow prove;
And ever the Strong shall fear him,
And ever the Weak shall love.

Boy, the whole world's before you,
With the love of your Mother and me—
A love that will last and live from
Here to Eternity!

And if, while you live in Honour,
All of these things be done,
Then you will be pride of my Manhood,
Which is more than being—My Son!

LOVE-DAWN

I

A TOUCH in the night,
A touch as of pain
And my heart was alight,
Was fanned by the breath of your
wonderful soul into flame.

II

'Ere sundown could break
Thro' its curtain of blue
My heart was awake,
I loved; and the being and birth of
my loving was you.

III

The fear that half kills,
The Hope that must die,
The feeling that thrills,
In strange combination I know;
not its How nor its Why.

IV

Dark eyes and pale hands
I dreamed of; and so
As one understands
Who has groped for, sought after
Something and found it—I know.

V

That Love is this thing,
Love dazzlingly bright,
Love child of the Spring,
Love seed of the dawn, flow'r of the
day and fruit of the night.

VI

And you are this Love,
You standing supreme,
Apart and above,
Beloved—the Lover and loved of
a wonderful dream.

VII

For you are all things,
The stars and the sea,
The singer that sings,
The Fount and the fountain, the gift
and the giver to me.

VIII

Thus-wise am I blessed;
Yet insomuch curs'd—
To seek after rest,
The Peace and the sleep that shall
follow the slaking of thirst.

IX

I was blind with tears
 And slow to rejoice;
 I was deaf—with ears
 That heard not, nor heeded nor throbb'd
 at the sound of your voice.

X

Now, that which I see—
 No sense can confute—
 A vine-clustered tree;
 But how shall I reach it, or when
 shall I taste of the fruit?

XI

Oh, Love, can you lean
 Your presence to me
 Who am but a stream
 Flowing to you—finding its goal
 in the infinite sea?

XII

Mine only to live,
 'Tis yours to control;
 Oh, Love, can you give
 Me body and soul,
 Taking that which is part of me,
 All the passion and heart of me,
 So that it grows by the strength of
 your love, into the whole?



TO MY UNBORN SON

“MY SON!” What simple, beautiful words!
“My Boy!” What a wonderful phrase!
We’re counting the months till you come to us—
The months, and the weeks and the days!

“The new little Stranger,” some babes are called,
But that’s not what you’re going to be;
With double my virtues and half of my faults
You can’t be a stranger to me!

Your Mother is straight as a sapling plant—
The cleanest and best of her clan—
You’re bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh
And by Heaven we’ll make you a man!

Soon I shall take you in two strong arms—
You that shall howl for joy—
With a simple, passionate, wonderful pride
Because you are just—My Boy!

And you shall lie in your Mother’s arms,
And croon at your Mother’s breast,
And I shall thank God I am there to shield
The two that I love the best.

A wonderful thing is a breaking wave,
And sweet is the scent of Spring,
But the silent voice of an unborn Babe
Is God’s most beautiful thing.

We’re list’ning now to that silent voice
And waiting, your Mother and I—
Waiting to welcome the fruit of our love
When you come to us by and by.

We’re hungry to show you a wonderful world
With wonderful things to be done,
We’re aching to give you the best of us both
And we’re lonely for you—My Son!



TELUCH BY THE FOUNTAIN

I

THE Fountain is cool, the water deep,
The shade of the trees should bring me sleep,
But I lie awake and dream instead—
Dream of the days long past and dead,
Arre, of the days long-dead.

II

I loved a woman once-a-day—
My body and soul I gave away;
How can a man in his youth be wise?
I was a fool and I loved her eyes.
Arre, I loved her eyes.

III

Her body was clothed and fair to see,
Her soul was naked as soul could be;
Ram, Sita Ram, what a fool was I,
Now I am old and I wonder why.
Arre, I wonder why?

IV

I had a friend in my early youth
Who was a brave man and loved the Truth.
But her eyes were pleading, they made an end
To my peace of mind till I killed my friend.
Arre, I killed my friend.

V

When I was sick'ning from the strife
The woman became another's wife.
I had the luck to remain unwed;
My friend was luckiest: He was dead.
Arre, my friend was dead.

VI

So now I sit by the fountain cool
Alone, a weary and toothless fool;
The fountain reflects a woman's eyes,
But I have grown old and my heart is wise.
Arre, my heart is wise.

MY COUNTRY

I

PRINCESS among the Nations,
Ringeth thy magic call;
England, wrapped in a Western shroud;
India, passionate, pleading, proud—
India—Mother of all.

Oh, India, my India, where blooms the summer rose,
Land of Behari Sun-Dawn, land of Jellibeten snows,
How much thy children love thee God knows—God only knows.

II

Sons from among all Nations,
Thy daughters hold in thrall;
England, fair as the smile of Spring;
India, dark as a raven's wing,
India—lover of all.

Oh, India, my India, where Mother Ganges flows,
My brothers woo'd your daughter, the daffodil and rose;
How much my brothers suffered God knows—God only knows.

III

Men of a hundred Houries
Answered thy siren's call;
England, Ireland and Hindustan,
Each a brother and each a man,
India—claimer of all.

Oh, India, my India, the summer comes and goes,
The rain in season falleth, the breeze in season blows,
But the secret of the glamour on thy Sons—God only knows.

IV

Seventy thousand battles
(Hearken the bugle call),
More than ever my song can tell
(Ten men answered and nine men fell);
India—taker of all.

Oh, India, my India, ours are thy bitter foes;
We know how strong and deeply thy Daughter Ganges flows.
But the depth of thy Blood—red rivers God knows—God only
knows.

V

We that are left are chafing,
Hearing again thy call;
Poet, Pioneer, Prince and Priest,
Saint and Sinner and man and beast,
Crave the scent of the magic East;
India—Mother of all.

Oh, India, my India—Mother of bitter woes,
Thy memory shall leave us when life itself shall close;
How much thy children love thee God knows—God only knows.

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